

Digital Pictures

Taking Better Pictures

By Wayne Halm

Introduction

Fortunately everyone takes some very good pictures. Unfortunately, most of us take a lot of bad ones between the good ones. The ten tips described below are aimed at reducing the number of bad ones.

Ten is too many - few people can remember all of them in every picture. But each one considered will make each picture a bit better.

- 1. Take huge numbers of pictures** - One of the nicest things about digital cameras is that the cost of taking another picture is minuscule. Make use of this feature and take lots of pictures.
- 2. Think before you click** - Interesting pictures are pictures of something in particular, they have a focus. Before each picture is taken decide what its focus should be - and take a picture of that.
- 3. Move in close** - If you want a picture of a bush with Mary standing in front of it - fine, frame the entire bush in the picture. But if you want a picture of Mary, move in closer and take a picture of Mary, forget the bush.
- 4. Move in closer** - Faces are much more interesting than shoes.
- 5. Pick a point of view** - Select an angle that best displays the subject attribute of interest. If the picture is to be of Little Ted with pudding on his face, a profile is probably not the best angle, a frontal view showing both cheeks is probably better. Having the bowl and spoon in the picture might be even better yet.
- 6. Consider the foreground** - Minimize the distraction between you and the subject of your picture. When taking a picture across a table, the plate in front of the subject is probably fine - but move the bottle of Ketchup from the center of the table.
- 7. Consider the background** - The background should highlight the subject, not detract from it, and

definitely not swallow it. Mary's white prom dress will show up much better in front of a green bush than in front of the white living room wall - Little Ted on his tricycle behind her will be a definite distraction.

- 8. Notice the light** - Is there a shadow across the face, are the eyes in deep shade, is the sun (a lamp or window) behind the subject? All are things that usually should be avoided.
- 9. Watch the horizontals and verticals** - Don't tilt the camera. Pictures where the horizontal lines are horizontal and the vertical lines are vertical are much more pleasing.
- 10. Follow the Rule of Thirds** - It's almost always better to have the center of the subject of interest positioned a third of the way into the picture - not at the exact center.

Conclusion

The "professional folks" are probably chuckling right now. Well let them, those of us with real jobs take more pictures than they do anyway. By applying some of these simple tips the rest of us will get more really good pictures. You don't have to remember everything - just pause an think before you click.

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